Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior version, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. – 7. (canceled)

8. (original) A method for policy based accounting in an Multi-Protocol Label Switched network, the method comprising:

receiving a label switched path (LSP) signaling message at a first packet forwarding device;

accessing a policy table to identify a billing party associated with the signaling message;

forwarding the signaling message to a second downstream packet forwarding device only subsequent to identifying the associated billing party in the policy table.

9. (original) The method for policy based accounting of claim 8, further comprising returning a message to a source of the packet to be forwarded indicating a failed transmission if the policy table does not identify a billing party associated with the packet.

10. (original) The method for policy based accounting of claim 8, further comprising transmitting an authorization request message associated with the packet and only forwarding the packet subsequent to receiving an authorization approval message associated with the packet.

11.   (original) The method for policy based accounting of claim 8, the method further comprising:

determining whether the billing party requires authorization before forwarding the packet;

transmitting an authorization request message associated with the packet;

forwarding the packet only subsequent to receiving an authorization approval message associated with the packet.

12.   (original) The method for policy based accounting of claim 8, further comprising transmitting the recorded data to a network management computer.

13.   (original) The method for policy based accounting of claim 8, wherein the policy table comprises a table identifying a billing party for a particular set of circumstances associated with the packet.

14.   (currently amended) A packet forwarding device, comprising:

a port interface for receiving a label switched path (LSP) signaling message ~~data packet~~;

and

a policy engine including a policy table for determining a billing party associated with the signaling message, wherein the signaling message is forwarded to a second downstream packet forwarding device only subsequent to identifying the associated billing party in the policy table ~~data packet based on information included in the data packet~~.

15.   (original) The packet forwarding device of claim 14, wherein the policy table

includes rules identifying a billing party and a payment mechanism for different data packets.

16.   (original) The packet forwarding device of claim 14, further comprising:

a memory;

a classifier engine for recording statistics associated with data packets forwarded by the

packet forwarding device to the memory, each statistic identifying the associated billing party.

17.   (original) The packet forwarding device of claim 16, further comprising a billing

engine for transmitting information including at least a portion of the recorded statistics to a

remote computer.

18.   (original) The packet forwarding device of claim 14 further comprising a user

interface to permit the policy table to be modified from a remote computer.

19.   (original) The packet forwarding device of claim 14, wherein the table identifies

a first payment mechanism for a first set of data packets and a second payment mechanism for

the second set of data packets, the first payment mechanism being different from the second

payment mechanism.

20.   (currently amended) The packet forwarding device of claim 14, wherein the table

identifies the destination of the data packet as the billing party for at least one set of data packets.

21.   (original) The packet forwarding device of claim 14, wherein the table identifies

a source from which authorization must be received before forwarding an associated data packet.

22.   (original) The packet forwarding device of claim 14, wherein the table identifies the billing party based at least in part on a current time of day.

23.   (currently amended) A packet forwarding device, comprising:

means for receiving a label switch path (LSP) signaling message at a first packet forwarding device packet to be forwarded over a network;

means for accessing a policy table to identify a billing party associated with the signaling message packet;

means for forwarding the signaling message to a second downstream packet forwarding device only subsequent to identifying the associated billing party in the policy table packet only if the policy table identifies a billing party associated with the packet;

means for recording data corresponding with the forwarding of the packet and the associated billing party.

24.   (canceled)

25.   (original) A system for policy based accounting in an Multi-Protocol Label Switched network, the system comprising:

means for receiving a label switched path (LSP) signaling message at a first packet forwarding device;

means for accessing a policy table to identify a billing party associated with the signaling message;

means for forwarding the signaling message to a second downstream packet forwarding

device only subsequent to identifying the associated billing party in the policy table.

26. (original) A computer-readable medium comprising program instructions for causing a data processor to execute a method comprising:

receiving a label switched path (LSP) signaling message at a first packet forwarding device;

accessing a policy table to identify a billing party associated with the signaling message;

forwarding the signaling message to a second downstream packet forwarding device only subsequent to identifying the associated billing party in the policy table.